

IMPACT OF ILLEGAL NARCOTICS ON OUR SOCIETY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, it is Tuesday night, and again I rush to the floor to talk about illegal narcotics and its impact upon our society and the responsibility we have as a Congress to deal with probably the most important pressing social issue.

It is interesting to sit here and listen to some of my colleagues, not the last two speakers, but previous speakers who talked about the focus of the tension of this Congress during the last week and last several weeks since Columbine.

The latest solution is, I guess, to control gun show sales and then also putting child safety locks on guns, both remedies that may solve some incidences and crime and the use of firearms. But it is amazing how the people who really, I think, got us into this situation we are into, with some of the disrespect for the law, some of the lack of law and order, some of the lack of discipline in our schools, the liberal court decisions and appointments that have gotten us into this situation where young people do not know right from wrong and where anything goes in our society, they come up with solutions that address a tiny part of the problem.

They will go to the heart and soul of this subject, the child or the young person that is committing that crime. It is interesting.

There were 10,000 murders by guns last year in this country, and there should not be one murder in this Nation by a gun or a knife or an explosive or through any other mayhem.

But, again, the liberal side likes to look at these issues and address a little bit of the symptoms and not really address the root problems.

One of the problems that I continually come to the floor and talk about is the problem of illegal narcotics. Certainly if we looked at the root of violence in this country and crime in this country, there is a direct correlation between crime and illegal narcotics use.

Probably a vast majority of the murders committed in the United States were drug related or the individual involved was involved in some type of substance abuse. While there were 10,000 murdered by guns in this country, there were 14,000 who died from the direct cause of drug-related deaths. That does not get much attention. It is unfortunate that, again, we just address some of the symptoms, we do not address the root problems.

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I am here again tonight to talk about a problem that we have in our communities. As I said before in the House, we

have a Columbine in our Nation every single day times three with the number of young people that are dying of drug-related deaths. I am not talking totally about the number of suicides, the number of automobile accidents, the other unreported deaths, but more than 14,000 drug-related deaths in the United States that we can trace to this very serious problem in our Nation.

It is interesting, too, that the statistics show that some of the young people involved in violence in our schools and communities, and also involved with weapons, whether they be guns or explosives, also have a drug or substance abuse problem. This one study I will quote, by the Parent Resources and Information on Drugs, called PRID, reported that of high school students who had carried guns to school, 31 percent used cocaine compared to 2 percent of students who had never carried guns to school. The same relationship was found among students in junior high school in the study. The number of gang members, and again we are just zeroing in on one substance, cocaine, who reported using cocaine upon their arrest was 19 percent.

Again, if we start tracing illegal narcotics and substance abuse to our young people, we start looking at the root problem.

Now, we have in our Nation, across the land in jails and prisons and penitentiaries and holding facilities nearly 2 million, 1.8 million, Americans. It is estimated in the hearings that we have conducted both here in Washington and field hearings that we have conducted in our Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources of the Committee on Government Reform, that, in fact, somewhere in the neighborhood of 70 percent of the people behind bars, incarcerated in our prisons and jails, are there because of drug-related offenses. This is a startling statistic.

And, in fact, what is even more startling is the more prisoners who are tested who come into our prisons for illegal narcotics, we find the percentage is increasing every year of drug offenders coming into the system. In fact, even those who are selling drugs are hooked on drugs. Eighty-one percent of the individuals selling drugs tested positive at the time of the arrest, including 56 percent for cocaine and 13 percent of them for heroin.

Again, if we look behind the gun, if we look behind the crime, we see a very serious problem, and that is the problem of illegal narcotics.

Now, some would say, why do we not just let these people out; they are committing harmless crimes, and they should not be incarcerated. We also hear people say, well, most of the people in jail are there because of possession, maybe of marijuana or small amounts of some illegal substance. As chair of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources, we were able to convene, and I chaired last week, probably one of the

first hearings of its type in some years in the Congress. I am not sure even if there had been a previous hearing on the subject. But it was entitled the Pros and Cons of Drug Legalization, Decriminalization and Harm Reduction.

That title was chosen to get people to think and also to have people present before our committee the pros and cons of legalization, because many folks across the land are saying, again, let these folks out of jail, they are there for possession for some minor crime.

Our hearing was very interesting this past week in that we debunked a number of the myths relating to those people who are in prison for a crime. We found, in fact, that they are not there for simple possession. Several studies were reported and are part of that CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, but one study that I thought was most interesting, and I pointed this out before, was one conducted in the State of New York that was just completed. It is a study just out from the State Commissioner of Criminal Justice which tells a different story about who is in prison and incarcerated there on drug-related offenses.

In 1996, 87 percent of the 22,000 people in jail in New York for drug crimes were in for selling drugs or intent to sell. Of the 13 percent doing time for possession, 76 percent were arrested for selling drugs or intending to sell. And, actually, some of the final sentences were pleaded down, as they say, to possession. So they were not actually possession.

So here we have a recent study from the State of New York that debunks the theory that people in our jails are there for possession of small amounts of so-called harmless narcotics.

It is interesting that the question also comes before our subcommittee and before the Congress about the tough laws. Are tough laws effective, and do tough laws have any effect on these people who are involved with illegal narcotics? A Dr. Mitchell Rosenthal, head of Phoenix House, a national drug treatment center based in Manhattan, said these tough drug laws have diverted lots of people into treatment who would not have otherwise gone into treatment.

So, again, some of the people who deal with people who are in prisons, people who are involved in illegal narcotics and the treatment for that, they provided testimony to our committee that debunks some of the myths about who is in prison and why they are there.

It was interesting to also have in our panel of witnesses the new Florida State drug czar, Mr. Jim McDonough. He was formerly the Deputy Director of the National Office of Drug Control Policy, and has now been appointed by Governor Bush, Governor Jeb Bush, I do not want to mix him up with the man who is going to be President. In fact, Jeb Bush, our new Governor, created a czar's office and appointed Jim McDonough to head that position.

Jim McDonough testified before us on his viewpoint, and he has a great deal of experience over the years not only at the national level, but dealing with this drug issue. And he said, and let me quote, "Legalizing drugs is a notion to which I am steadfastly opposed. I came to this position after years of observation and study of the nature of drug addiction and its horrific consequences for the addicted, their families and society. The immense costs that drug addiction extract on our Nation were driven home to me during my tenure as Director of Drug Strategy for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. My recent experience as the Director of Florida's Office of Drug Control have only served to reinforce my beliefs on the subject."

So we had a number of people testifying that, again, drug legalization does not make much sense, and, in fact, the liberalization policies do not work. And I want to talk about those liberalization policies in just a moment and give some very specific examples which we had in the hearing and I have talked about before.

But, again, we had a wide variety of testimony. I was quite shocked at the testimony of a representative of Cato Institute, a fairly well-respected think tank here in Washington. The executive vice president of Cato testified before our subcommittee that he felt it was time to legalize heroin and cocaine and basically market it like tobacco and alcohol and other regulated products that we have today. Again, though, the bulk of testimony disputed what Mr. Boaz commented in our hearing, and actually the facts just refuted what he was promoting.

It is important that we just look at a couple of facts that were brought out in the hearing. First of all, it is important to note that drugs are harmful, and not because they are illegal. They are illegal and have been made illegal because they are harmful, and we had scientific evidence that supported that fact; in fact, a bibliography that would probably fill the entire CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, this edition anyway, of those who have looked at these illegal narcotics and have shown us exactly what happens to the body and the mind.

What was particularly interesting is some of the scientists produced X-rays of the brain, images of the brain, which showed the effect of methamphetamine on the brain and how the pattern of abuse begins to model some of the serious diseases that we see in brain scans that are done with people who have Parkinson's or Alzheimer's or other diseases of the brain. So these types of disabilities and diseases can be induced by illegal narcotics.

We have made drugs illegal because they are harmful. Increasing the availability of drugs through legalization would dramatically increase the harm to all of our citizens. One of the problems that we would have with legalization is, the main targets and the main problem that we have today, is our

young people. If we look at the statistics, the statistics are just mind-boggling as far as use of illegal narcotics among our young people. It has leveled off some in the adult population. But, for example, the teenage use of heroin in the last 6 or 7 years has soared 875 percent in our teenage population. So no one would be harmed more than those that we are trying to protect, and that is our young people.

And the question was raised in our hearing and has been raised, too, in the Congress about the public's feeling on this subject. A 1998 poll of voters conducted by the Family Research Council found that 8 of 10 respondents rejected legalization of drugs like cocaine and heroin. So certainly the testimony provided by Mr. Boaz, or Cato, for legalizing these is opposed by a most recent poll, which states, and these numbers are provided by the Family Research Council, that 80 percent of Americans oppose legalization, and 7 out of the 10 are in very strong opposition. A 1999 Gallup poll found that 69 percent of Americans oppose the legalization of marijuana.

One of the items that our hearing focused on, and one of the reasons for the hearing, was that we have lost some of the battles in some of the States around the country on the question of legalization of marijuana for medical purposes. I plan to conduct additional in-depth hearings on that subject, but it is interesting, and we sort of scratched the surface in our hearings about what has been going on, about the tens of millions of dollars that have been coming in to promote this legalization.

Both our national drug czar, Barry McCaffrey, and others testified that they felt that the efforts to get a foothold on the legalization of what are illegal drugs today is being done through this highly-financed campaign to legalize marijuana for medical use. We will look, as I said, further at that question. But this poll says that 69 percent of Americans even oppose the legalization of marijuana.

Proponents argue that legalization is a cure-all for our Nation's drug problem. However, the facts that were brought out in our hearing show that legalization is not a panacea. In fact, the statistics and facts that were brought forth show that legalization and liberalization, in fact, becomes a poison. Legalization would dramatically expand America's drug dependence, significantly increasing societal costs of drug abuse, and put countless more people's lives at risk, and, again, particularly our young people.

□ 1945

The legalization of drugs in the United States would lead to a disproportionate increase in drug use among our young people. Youth drug use, as I have said, has dramatically increased. And our youth drug use is also driven by additives. When young people perceive drugs as risky and socially unacceptable, our youth drug use drops.

We saw that in the Reagan and Bush administration. We had a President, a First Lady, and others who provided leadership and they started campaigns to "just say no." They started really an anti-narcotics effort, a real war on drugs. And that message really got through. Because drug use went down, down, down. Only since 1993, with this President and this administration, have we seen a reversal in that trend.

Legalization would send a strong message that taking drugs is safe and socially accepted behavior that should be tolerated among peers, and this would also go for children again who are most impressionable and do the most harm again among our young population. Such a normalization would play a major role in softening our youth attitudes, and ultimately I think we would see an even greater increase in drug use among our young people.

By increasing the rates of drug abuse, legalization would exact a tremendous cost on our society. This is another fact that was pointed out in our hearings. In fact, if drugs were legalized, the United States would see a significant increase in the number of drug users, the number of addicts, and the number of people dying from drug-related causes. And I will have a little bit more to point out on a couple of studies that were done in just a moment that confirm that.

While many of these costs would fall first and foremost on the drug user, countless others would also suffer if drugs were legalized. Contrary to what the liberal thought folks and legalizers would have us believe, drug use is not indeed a victimless crime. Legalizers will claim the fact that alcohol and tobacco, both legal substances for adults, cause so much harm to society that we should look at drugs and let drugs follow in their pattern.

According to their logic, we cannot get too much of a bad thing. That analogy is false. Law enforcement experts and prison statistics indicate that drug use is directly or indirectly related to 60 to 80 percent of the crime in the United States. And then, of course, they always point to different models. We talk about European models of Switzerland; and, of course, the most well-known is the Dutch model.

The Dutch adopted a soft approach to some drugs. And while they have adopted a softer approach, they have not legalized drugs. Under the Dutch system, possession and small sales of marijuana have been decriminalized. However, marijuana production and larger sales remain criminal. Drugs such as cocaine and heroin remain illegal.

When the Dutch coffee shops started selling marijuana in small quantities, the use of the drug more than doubled between 1984, when they began this, and 1996; and this is particularly among the young people, 18- to 25-year-olds.

In 1997, there was a 25-percent increase in the number of registered cannabis addicts receiving treatment, as compared to a mere three percent rise in the cases of alcohol use. This is interesting because it shows where they have a liberalization and legalization, they have increased addiction.

During this period, the Netherlands has also experienced a serious problem with other substances of abuse, in particular heroin and other synthetic drugs, which remain illegal. The number of heroin addicts in Holland almost tripled since the liberalization of drug policies was instituted.

Again, it shows that this liberal policy, when they liberalize with illegal narcotics, they pay for it on the other end. In most cases, crime does not dramatically drop off but what, in fact, happens is they create a whole new population of addicts.

Let me just show my colleagues, and we have used this chart before, but this is one of the most telling charts. We brought it in the hearing and I displayed it again in the hearing. This shows Baltimore. In Baltimore, in 1950, the population was over 900,000. In 1996, it was 675,000. In 1950, they had 300 heroin addicts. And these statistics were given to me by our Drug Enforcement Agency.

In 1996, as I said, the population dropped some 300,000. Although the City of Baltimore, which had a liberal policy and liberal leadership, had its heroin addict population rise to 38,985. Now, this is the statistic we had for 1996. In fact, I am told that the figure is closer to 50,000. It is almost really one per 10 in Baltimore.

So not only the Dutch model which we just cited but also the Baltimore model shows us that, as we liberalize, we end up, in fact, with this incredible population of addicts.

Now, and I used this in the hearing, if this model was continued in the United States and we legalized heroin, for example, we could have in the neighborhood of about 25 million heroin addicts in the United States. So it shows again, whether it is the Dutch model or the Baltimore model, that this does not work.

Now, we do pay a big price for all of the use that these illegal narcotics and abuse of illegal narcotics. I try to cite every week some of the latest findings or some of the latest news. I come from the State of Florida. I represent East Central Florida. Florida has been plagued by the toll of illegal narcotics.

This headline was in one of the local papers just within the last few weeks. It says, "Illegal Drug Use Toll Soars." "Drug abuse is the main force in driving up hospital charges," the study indicates. The hospital tab just indicated in this study was \$137.5 million in the State of Florida.

Let me read a little bit about what took place and what this study revealed. "A new State study," and again this is in the State of Florida,

Details the high cost of drug abuse to our Floridian hospitals and also to the Florida

taxpayers. The hospital costs for medical conditions, including poisoning, overdoses, and heart attacks triggered by drug abuse in the State, reached about \$137.5 million in 1997, with cocaine and narcotics ranking as the most destructive. Those costs covered just the hospital charges and do not include doctors' time and other services and other things, such as outpatient care and other problems a patient might incur as a result of drug abuse. In its first drug hospitalization cost study, completed in May, the Agency for Health Care Administration said a total of 39,764 cases with drug abuse diagnosis was reported by Floridian hospitals in 1997, the most recent year of statistics that are available.

It is interesting also about this article, and it is a rather lengthy article and I am only citing part of it here, is that most of those affected in these cases, in fact, 59 percent of those who are hospitalized and incurred this cost were between age 15 and 39, the youngest part of our population again the victims of illegal narcotics.

Additionally, I like to update my colleagues on different articles about what drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking is doing. Earlier this year, "Florida Trend" produced their publication with a cover "High Times Special Report, Florida's Billion-Dollar Drug Business," another indication of the impact of illegal narcotics and drug trafficking in my State.

This article said, "High Times," that is the title, "The illegal drug industry has become a fixture in Florida's economy and nearly as corporate as Microsoft."

Let me just read a little bit. "Central Florida has become a major distribution hub and tested market for methamphetamines and especially for heroin, which killed more Central Floridians last year than homicide."

I have carried to the floor one of our headlines that said just recently that more people, particularly our young people in Central Florida, have died as a result of drug-related deaths than homicide.

This study also has some information by University of Miami Business Professor Robert Gross, who estimates that cocaine traffickers in Florida, including wholesalers and low-level dealers, earn in the neighborhood of \$5.4 billion in this illegal trade. And the article goes on and on, in fact it is quite lengthy, telling about the impact of illegal narcotics, the effort to dispose of some of the income, which is all in cash. For every million dollars, it is estimated around 110 pounds of cash has to be laundered. Incredible figures in this drug war. That is in Florida.

Fairly recently a Texas publication, "The Texas Monthly," published a riveting story on "Teenage Wasteland" it is called, and that cited the death and destruction that drugs have brought to Plano, Texas.

I will just quote a little bit of that article. It says, "Now heroin has hit the city hard. There have been 15 fatal heroin overdoses in the past 2 years, nine of them teenagers, all but one younger than 23. They came from good

homes, and they had bright futures." And it goes on to details. Another story of another community.

It is not just Florida our hearings have indicated. It is Texas, Minnesota, Iowa, California, the list goes on and on, of areas where we have had incredible problems from the impact of illegal narcotics.

I cited a little bit earlier the Baltimore model and the Dutch model, which were brought up in our hearings and provided as evidence in our hearings relating to legalization. We do know, however, that in fact top policies relating to illegal narcotics do work. There is no more telling evidence than the evidence that is supplied by DEA on the deaths in New York City. These are the decreases in the murder rate in New York City.

If we look back to the early part of this decade, they were averaging over 2,000 deaths in New York City according to this report again by DEA.

□ 2000

The tough policies of the mayor, a former prosecutor, Rudy Giuliani, have brought the latest tally of murders down to 629, a 70 percent decrease in murders in that city. It just shows again that tough enforcement policy does in fact work and is effective in reducing murders, drug abuse and drug-related crimes. There is no question about it. The statistics speak for themselves.

What I would also like to do tonight, in addition to talking about the hearing that we held last week, is talk about a hearing that we are going to hold tomorrow, and that is a hearing on extradition, and it relates to Mexico. As I have pointed out before, we know where the drugs are coming from.

Let me pull up another chart here. This chart shows where heroin is coming into the United States, its origin. Seventy-five percent of the heroin comes from South America. This is a dramatic change over a few years ago, mostly brought about as a result of the Clinton policies to stop drug interdiction, to stop the crop eradication programs, to take the military out of the war on drugs; to basically close down the war on drugs, that decision was made. We now see South America as the source of 75 percent of the heroin. We see smaller amounts, 5 percent from Southeast Asia and Southwest Asia is 6 percent. If we added Mexico in, we are looking at 89 percent of the heroin coming from Mexico, in South America.

The Clinton administration had a very specific policy of not providing assistance, arms, helicopters, resources in any way to Colombia. That is how Colombia got to be the number one producer of cocaine in the past 6 years. It was not even on the chart 6 years ago. The number one producer of heroin in the last 6 years. There was almost zero heroin or opium poppy grown in Colombia 6 years ago. Again, the direct result of this administration's policy was to have that country now become the major producer. That heroin

and cocaine are transiting not only directly from Colombia but 60 to 70 percent of the hard drugs coming into the United States are transiting through Mexico. That includes cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines. Mexico has the distinction of being our number one producer of methamphetamines, but it also accounts for 60 to 70 percent of all the hard drugs coming into the United States and probably even a bigger percentage of marijuana.

For that reason, I intend to focus attention tonight, tomorrow and in the future on the problems we have had with Mexico, because in spite of the United States providing incredible trade benefits, financial support to Mexico, Mexico has snubbed its nose at the United States. They have gotten away with allowing this President, this administration, to certify Mexico as fully cooperating, and this administration, this President, have really made a sham of the certification process, because Congress passed a law back in 1986 that said the President must certify annually whether a country is fully cooperating with the United States in order to get foreign aid, trade and financial benefits. That is the law of the land. Now, they have certified Mexico as fully cooperating, in spite of the fact that Mexico, after repeated requests, have not extradited to date one Mexican national who is a major drug trafficker.

Tomorrow, our hearing will focus primarily on the question of Mexico becoming a haven for murderers and drug traffickers. According to testimony before our subcommittee by the Department of Justice recently, as of last month, there are currently about 275 outstanding requests for extradition of Mexican nationals. About 47 of these individuals are in custody in Mexico. Unfortunately, many of these individuals, including the individual we are talking about tomorrow in our hearing, who was convicted of a brutal slaying in southwest Florida of the mother, I believe, of six children, who fled this country and is charged with murder and we have had an extradition request for nearly 2 years, Mexico has ignored those requests, for 275 outstanding extradition requests and the Del Toro request. The Del Toro request again is the focus of our hearing tomorrow, a heinous crime, and after repeated requests this administration still has not extradited that individual. Tomorrow we hope to find out more of the details surrounding this case and put additional pressure on Mexico to act.

Unfortunately, what we have found in just our hearings to date is that the system of justice in Mexico is nearly completely broken, that bribes are paid to judges and to prosecutors, that the system of justice is corrupt and subject to corruption and that many of these individuals who we are seeking extradition of back to the United States to face justice which they fear, these individuals are gaming the system in Mexico. Now, Mr. Del Toro, who is wanted

on a charge again of this heinous murder in southwest Florida, is not a Mexican national, he is a United States citizen. He was born in the United States. His parents were born in the United States. And he fled to Mexico and has used Mexico as a cover and again the corrupt Mexican judicial system to avoid prosecution, to avoid coming to the United States through extradition. We will find out why he and others have not been extradited.

In the area of narcotics violation, Mexican narcotics trafficking organizations facilitate the movement of between 50 and 60 percent of the almost 300 metric tons of cocaine consumed in the United States annually. Mexico is now the source, as we saw from the chart, of 14 percent of the heroin seized by law enforcement in this country. Just a few years ago, it was not even on the charts. Now they are becoming a major producer. And Mexico also takes the leading role and wins the Emmy award for being the chief smuggler of methamphetamine and the base ingredient for methamphetamine, as well as marijuana.

What again is a slap in the face to the United States Congress who requested over 2 years in a resolution passed on this floor the extradition of major drug traffickers, to date not one major drug trafficker has been extradited.

Let me just point out a few of those suspects who were most wanted and for whom we have asked for extradition. These will be a few of our most popular individuals tonight.

This is Rafael Caro-Quintero. Mr. Caro-Quintero is a Mexican national and a U.S. fugitive. He is incarcerated in Mexico on drug charges and the U.S. has asked that he be extradited. He has 22 pending U.S. criminal charges against him. His organization was responsible for sending tons of drugs into the United States. If anyone can deliver him to the United States, I think there is a multi-million-dollar award for his capture. We would like him extradited. We would like him to see justice in the United States of America.

Let me also bring up two more suspects we will talk about a little bit tomorrow and tonight. In fact, we have a family routine here. We have Luis and Jesus Amezcua. We have two brothers and a third here. The Amezcua brothers, there are three of them, are the chiefs of one of the world's largest methamphetamine trafficking organizations. Recently, despite overwhelming evidence, all Mexican drug charges have been dismissed. These drug dealers, and again the major identified methamphetamine dealers who are bringing that death and destruction into the United States have had their drug charges dismissed in Mexico. The Amezcuas, I believe two of them, are being held in custody on extradition orders from the United States but to date have not been extradited. Again the Mexican court, making a joke of justice even in their own coun-

try, have dropped charges against them. Another major methamphetamine kingpin, their younger brother, Adam, was released from prison in May. A Mexican appellate judge threw out trafficking and other charges against him. So we are also looking for the Amezcua brothers. I will say since we began our harangue against Mexico this year and pressure that we have brought and also legislation that has been introduced by myself, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. McCOLLUM), the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) and others that we are going to go after the assets of these major drug kingpins and other assets of some of those organizations that are related to these drug traffickers.

We have succeeded just in the last 2 weeks in getting the extradition of William Brian Martin. He was turned over, I believe, recently at the border. He was wanted on a whole bunch of charges. This individual is an American national. Again we have waited since 1993 for that extradition.

It is my hope through tomorrow's hearing that we can bring a murderer to justice in the United States and that we can shed light on how he has escaped justice and how he has used the Mexican judicial system to avoid extradition. We still have over 40 major Mexican drug traffickers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask to include in the RECORD a list of all of the major drug traffickers with outstanding extradition requests.

The list is as follows:

MAJOR MEXICAN DRUG TRAFFICKERS WITH
OUTSTANDING EXTRADITION REQUESTS
(SOURCE: DEA)

Agustin Vasquez-Mendoza
Ramon Arrellano-Felix
Rafael Caro-Quintero
Vincente Carrillio-Fuentes
Miguel Angel Martinez-Martinez
Antonio Reynoso-Gonzalez
Mario Antonio Hernandez-Acosta
Jesus Amezcua-Contreras
Arturo Paez-Martinez
Jaime Ladino-Avila
Jose Gerardo Alvarez-Vasquez
Luis Amezcua-Contreras

Mr. Speaker, again we will continue to bring to the Congress, to the House of Representatives, the problem that we face with illegal narcotics, the problem that we face in dealing with countries like Mexico where we have 60 to 70 percent of the hard drugs trafficking through that country into the United States, now becoming a source country of production and a country that has failed miserably in cooperating with extraditing both murderers and major drug traffickers to the United States. We hope additionally to get assistance from Mexico in signing a maritime agreement which we have requested for 2 years and they have ignored. We hope to get assistance from the Mexicans to aid our DEA agents to defend themselves while in Mexican territory, and there are just a handful of these brave DEA agents in that country. We hope, and we have some reports that Mexico is beginning to install radar in the

south, and we hope to hold their feet to the fire because the drugs coming up from Colombia and South America transit through the south of Mexico. Finally, we want to seek the cooperation of Mexico in enforcing laws that they have passed dealing with illegal narcotics trafficking which they have really thumbed their nose at, including Operation Casa Blanca, a U.S. Customs operation where last year our Customs investigators uncovered a plot to launder hundreds of millions of dollars through banks and arrested individuals, indicted individuals, and Mexican officials knew about it and even so Mexico when these indictments and arrests were made threatened to arrest United States Customs officials and other U.S. law enforcement officers. So rather than cooperate fully as the law requires for certification, they have actually thumbed their nose at the United States.

□ 2015

So, Mr. Speaker, with those comments tonight, tomorrow we will hear more about Mexico and how it has become a haven for murderers and for drug traffickers, and we will return to the floor with additional information both to the Congress and the American people on the biggest social problem facing our Nation and the root problem to many of the crimes, the murders, the gun offenses that we see in this Nation. That is the problem of illegal narcotics.

EVENTS IN THE BALKANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, before I get into tonight's discussion, I want to first compliment my good friend from Florida (Mr. MICA) for his weekly reminder to this body and to the Nation about the evils of drugs and the drug war and the challenges that we still face as a Nation.

As a former prosecutor in western Wisconsin and special prosecutor in the State of Wisconsin, I saw up front and close and personal the evil effects that drugs have, not only in our society, but with individuals and the families and the communities in which the problem persists. And I look forward to working in the coming weeks and for the rest of this session with my friend from Florida to develop a comprehensive and commonsense policy in order to tackle this scourge in American society. But I do compliment him for all the wonderful work that he has done in committee and for this body for the sake of the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, what I like to do right now is kind of change gears a little bit. I rise today along with a few other colleagues who I anticipate will be joining me in a little bit to talk for a while

about the events in the Balkans and, more specifically, our involvement in Kosovo. The events have been progressing quite rapidly over the last week and a half or so after Milosevic had finally agreed to capitulate.

Now I think now is a good opportunity for us to kind of stand back and take a look at the past, present conditions in the Balkans area and also the vision of the future in that area, as tenuous as it may be.

There is no question that, thus far, things seem to be progressing according to plan, knock on wood, but it is going to be a very difficult task of implementing the peace, of securing it. Now that we have won the conflict, it is vitally important that we do everything possible not to lose the war, and that is the next great challenge that we face as a Nation, as the leader of the NATO alliance for the sake of the European continent.

But let us give credit where credit is due tonight, Mr. Speaker, starting with the troops in the area. I had the opportunity, the privilege really, a few short weeks ago to be a part of a small congressional delegation of 10 other Members who headed over to the Balkans on a fact-finding mission.

It was really a threefold purpose for going over there. One was to meet with military command, the leadership there, and get an assessment from them.

Another reason for going was to meet with the troops in the field, make sure that everything that they needed in order to carry out their mission as safely and efficiently as possible was being delivered to them.

Finally, a chance to get into the refugee camps, meet with the Kosovar refugees, families, hear from them firsthand what terror and horror they had just been put through in Kosovo, the fortunate ones that were able to successfully leave the country.

It was a fascinating trip, it was incredibly emotional and very moving listening to the firsthand accounts of the innocent civilians who were forced out of the country and what had just taken place inside their villages and cities.

All of them had their own horror story to tell. Each of them explained in their own terms the terror that they had just survived. I did not encounter one person in those refugee camps, Mr. Speaker, who was not affected by the loss of a loved one, either someone who they had personally witnessed executed before their very eyes or who had fled, many of them up into the mountains to avoid the Serb forces.

And you cannot help but go to a region and experience what I think we did as a delegation and not be moved and profoundly affected by what has taken place in the Balkans.

But I do believe that was the right policy for the right reason at the right time, the NATO campaign against Milosevic. I also believe that credit should go to the 19 democratic nations

of NATO who stood united and through their perseverance finally prevailed in getting Milosevic to capitulate and to end the atrocities in Kosovo.

I think it was a real show of determination and the very credibility of NATO and the U.S. leadership on the European continent, and as the leader of NATO was very much on the line.

But this policy has been difficult to explain to the folks back home in Wisconsin. I think by and large the people who I have had the opportunity to talk to about this and to elicit their opinions have felt very conflicted about our role in the Balkans and with the NATO air campaign.

They see, as everyone else does in the country, the horror image that has been reported on TV, and they have heard the stories, the plight of the Kosovar families, the ethnic cleansing and the atrocities that have taken place in Kosovo, and I think the natural reaction for most Americans is to try to do something to prevent that.

But on the other hand there was also the tug, the concern, that this could turn into a quagmire. It may be our next Vietnam in areas so far away that we knew very little about as far as the history and the peoples and the origins of the conflicts, the politics of the situation, the socioeconomic conditions in the Balkans, that people also felt conflicted about our active and leadership role in this campaign.

And so you get a lot of conflicting advice, as you can imagine, from folks back home. I have been certainly severely criticized in the press, letters to the editor, people on the street who come up to me who vehemently disagree with my support for the NATO campaign and my belief that it was in the United States' interests to be involved on the European continent again.

But hopefully what we have today is the dawn of the new era of peace, a lasting peace in the region, a peace that is going to finally see the removal of Slobodan Milosevic from power in Serbia, a peace that will see real democratic reform take place within the Balkan countries and a peace that will see the eventual inclusion of these Balkan nations into the community of nations in Europe as full-fledged partners in the European Union and perhaps even some day members of the NATO alliance itself.

Is this an illusion or a pipe dream? I really do not think so. But I think first and foremost the credit really does belong to those young men and women in American uniform who are being asked yet again in the 20th century to try to restore some peace and stability on a conflict-torn region called the European continent and to try to restore some humanity to the European continent.

I think the concern was as the 20th century entered in very bloody internecine warfare primarily in this region. The beginning of the 20th century that we were going to exit the 20th century